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Ripples From The Shah's Fall

This gets around in a moment to the early jockeying on the SALT, but it is interesting to note first what widespread global impact the fall of the shah of Iran has had.

There was a discussion one day last fall with several African and American officials taking part, the issue being whether or not the United States was doing enough to oppose the racist policies of the South African government. Why should not American corporations close down their plants in South Africa in protest of apartheid? There was that kind of question and related ones. Why could not the United States shut down the oil supply to South Africa by influencing the major oil companies? American officials in such discussions have the very devil of a time in making the argument that the White House or the Congress does not have the direct power to control what Gulf or Texaco or the other multinational oil companies might do.

The discussion broke up. One articulate black



woman chuckled and observed that the shah's troubles were having an impact on South Africa that might go beyond anything any of the big oil companies chose to do.

Turns out in fact that Iran was then one of the major suppliers of oil to South Africa. No more, not since the fall of the shah.

A related note. The shah was also the major supplier of oil to Israel, a reliable source of oil even when Israel and Arab neighbors were at war with each other.

Now, it turns out that the change of government in Iran may also directly affect the outcome of the SALT II treaty, even whether or not such a treaty can be approved in the United States Senate.

When the shah was still in power on the Peacock Throne, our most sophisticated intelligence gathering devices had a home in Iran, right there on the Russian border, in place to monitor Soviet efforts at developing new weapon systems, including those that might deliver nuclear weapons. The loss of two highly sophisticated electronic monitoring posts in Iran literally reduces the power of the United States to verify just what the Soviets are doing.

At issue, of course, is just how serious this

loss is. This has already become a significant part of the current debate on SALT II.

CIA Director Stansfield Turner reportedly told the Senate Intelligence Committee that it might take five years to replace the intelligence-gathering ability lost in Iran. That would mean that the United States would not really be in a position to monitor the Soviets until 1984.

The White House quickly disputed that version, saying it was likely that the loss could be made up in one year, not five. Defense Secretary Harold Brown weighed in on this side of the argument, saying "adequate verification" would be possible in about a year. Turner weighed in once more with a clarification of what he had told the Senate committee, supporting the White House and Brown, and saying that the leaked news story had tried to overly simplify a very complicated subject.

The issue has been joined, and the fate of the SALT II treaty may rest precisely on this issue. Do we have adequate means to verify any agreement on nuclear weapons with the Soviets? Georgia Sen. Sam Nunn has made himself expert in these areas. It will be important for the entire SALT II debate to see what Nunn's position turns out to be.